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# Introduction

AUTHOR(S):

THAN, TUN

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## INTRODUCTION

A BURMESE KING respected the customs of the people in as much as the same way as his subjects did (ROBs 19 June 1368, 5 December 1789 and 28 January 1795). He might, however, connive a crime committed against his person or property (ROBs 5 April 1568, 28 January 1795, 18 March 1796, 18 April 1811 and 22 March 1812). It was probably because of the Buddhist influence. He wanted his ministers to bring to his notice whenever a culprit had been sentenced to death for having misappropriated his property (ROB 18 April 1811 and 22 March 1812) because the culprit had a chance of being pardoned. A criminal who was about to be executed could be saved by the consort of Crown Prince (ROBs 18 February 1788 and 15 March 1788) without giving any reasons. The King's attitude on the Dhammathat was quite precise. He said that in almost all the law suits, the Dhammathats shall be the guide for making decisions (ROBs 18 August 1783, 29 August 1783, 12 November 1783 and 5 December 1789). There was, however, one exception. Some Royal Orders were to be taken into consideration before a final decision was made (ROB 18 August 1783). The King also thought it best to keep the number of law suits in the minimum at any time at any law court (ROB 5 December 1789) because to sue a case for redress at a court was always very expensive and many disputes could be settled, as it was allowed by custom, through arbitration (ROB 23 May 1801) except murder (ROB 3 August 1795). For a crime where capital punishment should be given, arbitration was not allowed and to withdraw a plaint of this serious nature made first at a court in order to settle it through arbitration is punishable (ROB 23 July 1801). In criminal procedure, five important additions were made by the King, viz.

- 1 Cases that fell within the jurisdiction of a lower court shall never be brought to Hluttaw (ROB 5 March 1805).
- 2 A city court's decision shall be taken as a precedent (ROB 5 December 1789).
- 3 Judgements should be passed as quickly as possible (ROB 12 July 1806) and if a court was slow to pass a decision, the plaintiff had the right to

apply for a transfer of his case to Taya Yon - Law Court, in the city (ROB 16 July 1806).

- 4 A judge shall name the punishment and it was Myo Wun - Town Officer, who shall execute the punishment (ROB 5 December 1789).
- 5 Any cultivator who was summoned to appear in a law court in a town or the capital city either as a witness or as a defendant must be allowed to go back to his field for cultivation when the growing season began (ROB 12 May 1801); because a cultivator's work to produce rice which was the main stay of the nation should not be disturbed; in fact all agricultural productions should be increased as much as possible (ROB 16 May 1801).

Tha King maintained that the punishment should be in right proportion to the damage done by a criminal act though he agreed that punishment might vary in accordance with the status of a man who committed a crime or to whom the wrong had been done and in a case of murder, although a compensation was allowed by the customary law, he said that from now onward it was to be a death sentence (ROB 5 December 1789). Anauk Thwa - Went the Way West, is the phrase for being taken to the cemetery for execution. Nga Myat Thu (Min Gyi Nanda Kyaw Htin) 'went the way west' (ROB 12 March 1788) though for what crime he was sentenced to death was not known. (Three days later he was pardoned : ROB 15 March 1788). Nga Myat Taw (Maha Thiri Zayya Thin Gyan) and Nga Kyaw Htway (Tipiṭakalaṅkāra-siridhajamahādharmarājadhīrājaguru, Bagaya Saya) 'went the way west' (ROB 12 April 1794) because the minister took the Authorised Copies of Piṭaka from (the Royal Library) to the monastery of the Royal Preceptor without any permission and there the copies were destroyed in fire. On the other hand, hardened criminals like robbers and thieves, were given amnesty; only those who were captured would be executed while those who voluntarily surrendered would be pardoned and enlisted in the King's fighting forces (ROB 24 July 1806). Even though the thieves were persuaded in this way to mend their old ways, burglary was the curse even of the capital city (ROB 19 October 1806). The King was lenient on two other curses of mankind, viz. gambling and prostitution. He said that gambling was all right if there were no cheating (ROB 28 January

1795) and with license within a given quarter (called Zagyin Wa) prostitution was legal (ROB 27 July 1783 and 28 January 1795). Sex perverts like lesbians and sodomites, however, must be punished (ROB 28 January 1795) though fellatio was not a crime when both parties agreed to it (ROB 2 October 1810).

In civil procedure the King wanted to use as much as possible the old records to verify statements regarding boundary demarcation or ownership of land. For instance, in a land dispute, the King wanted to use a relevant inscription on stone where the limits of a religious land (ROB 24 March 1783) or the jurisdiction of an officer would be given (1 December 1783, Kon I 1967, 556). In the family registers of either Athi - Common Folks, or Asu Angan - Group or Division of Service Men, generations of them would be enumerated. Any discrepancies as to a member of one group living or working among another group or division of children in a mixed (i.e. intergroup) marriage, should not be tolerated (ROBs 25 December 1783 and 2 November 1804). He also wanted the register of the Royal Family updated (ROB 20 January 1788) and all previous Royal Orders copied (ROB 20 February 1788). Accounts on historical events were checked against old records (ROB 6 February 1800). An officer and several scribes were assigned to copy all pagoda and monastery inscriptions which were in bad condition in all parts of Burma and to make new stone inscriptions of them (Kon II 1967, 88). Because the King considered that if anyone wanted to study the way of life, history was one of the best works to be consulted (ROB 28 January 1785). For future reference, all important current events must also be written most scrupulously allowing no mistakes (ROB 8 July 1806). He wanted the Palace Inscription of Shwe Nan Kyawt Shin - Lord of the Magnificent Palace, (S 872, AD 1510, List 10501, PPA 1892, 363-372) copied for use in some of his various construction plans (ROB 27 August 1806). He wanted Pagan Tet Nwe-In Kyaung Inscription (Wednesday 31 October 1441, List 934 abcd, PPA

1892, 78-90) copied in order to check the dates given in the treatises on the history of Buddhism in Burma submitted by the monks in connection with their line of teachers and how these teachers through many generations had determined the sabbath days of the Buddha's religion.

Inheritance among the Burmese is quite simple. When a man died, his wife became the sole owner of all property that the two had amassed together. When the parents died, their children inherited them. When the widower or widow died with no children, his or her parents or even grandparents might receive the inheritance. Although the general tendency is that an inheritance should go down as in a stream from a parent to children and it shall never ascend (as in a rising tide) from son or daughter to father, etc. But there are cases where it is possible for parents and grandparents to be reckoned as heirs to a property left by their dead son or daughter (See Manukye 1874, X 192, 277). When either ascending or descending becomes impossible, the property is escheated to the crown (Kaing Za 1900, 32; Kaung 1898, XXVI 413). An ascetic or a monk in the true sense of the way he is expected to live could have neither any worthy possession nor a heir. Nevertheless if one of them died leaving some heritable property, the King gets it (Manukye 1874, XI 2, 323). On the other hand when a master died with no heir except a slave, that slave gets his property and that inheritance includes his obligation to pay his dead master's debts; if the property that the slave gets is less than the debt, the slave shall serve the creditor until the time when the debt is considered as paid (Manukye 1874, III 65, 102). When a <sup>man</sup> died without any means to repay his debts, the creditor waits until someone turns up to bury the dead man. He shall ask the payment of his money from that man (Manukye 1874, III 70, 105). The underlying idea is that a man who looked after a dying man is taken to be that man's best friend and he is made his heir, i.e. to take the things he left

and to pay his debt. Alienation of a natural heir is possible when the son or or daughter, for instance, acted like an enemy to his or her parents (Manukye 1874, X 5, 312, 314). Animosity does not include marrying against the advise of the parents but it does include the change of religion from that of his or her parents. King Badon (1782 - 1819) made it very clear in the following Order :

We have one good example for cases of inheritance. A wealthy man had only one son who did not profess to believe in the true faith. When he was about to die, he left his property with a nephew who was of the true faith. When the son contended that he should have inherited the deceased father's estate, the judge decided in favour of the nephew in accordance with the will of the dead persons. Inheritance therefore does not go to a person who fails to live by the words of the parents. In other words, the son must be worthy of inheritance. In the five duties that a son owes to the parents, one is to live to be worthy of inheritance. On the other hand, not all the estates of a deceased person could be divided equally and given to all heirs. For instance, the eldest son alone inherits the office of the father. King Susima of Banaras had a purohita who conducted the ritual at an elephant parade (Susima Jataka No. 163). He died leaving a very young son. On reasons that this young boy had not mastered the three vedas and hatthisutta - elephant-craft, the king asked another Brahmin to conduct the ritual on the appointed day. The son was a Bodhisattva and he considered it very important that he alone, as his father's son, should have conducted the ceremony. He went to the Disapamokkhacariya at Takkasila which was 120 yojanas away. He did the journey in one day, learnt everything there was to learn in the night and got back to Banaras next day in time to claim his right to conduct the ceremony as one descended from seven generations of masters of such ceremonies. In order to save a break in the precedence he was given permission. He did it so well that he received many rewards. Though he was a true descendant, it was essential that he had the knowledge of the craft. When so qualified he became worthy of inheritance. Although right descent was essential, there were cases where the heirs had no proper knowledge of the office devolved and co-bearers were appointed. This led to some complications later as to who should be confirmed in the office and whose descendant inherits the office. No such difficulties should be allowed to continue. At any administrative unit, there must be only one officer of true descent. Reason as to a single person alone could not do the duty will not be accepted. If the person of true descent could not carry out his official task, let his son succeed him. When the successor is too young, someone has to help him but only during the time when he is a minor. Selling of office with the right of inheritance is not legal (ROB 28 January 1795, No. 49).

\* The five duties of a son or daughter are :

- 1 Nursing the aged parents,
- 2 Managing the family property after the parents had retired,
- 3 Being worthy of inheritance,
- 4 Sharing the merit of good deeds done, and
- 5 Doing nothing to discredit the good name of the family.

Accordingly promogeniture is right only when the son is worthy to take his father's place (ROBs 29 September 1806 and 6 November 1806). But except for provincial headman, no office in the administration is considered as hereditary.

On estates without heir, the King asserted that it was his and he passed Orders giving it away to anyone he chose. For instance when Mi Min U, widow of Yaza Kyaw Thu, passed away with no heirs, the King gave her property to Princess Thinza (ROB 21 February 1806). On the death of Mi Yun San (Gadu Gadaw), her estate went to (Chief) Queen by the King's Order. The Queen had also to take the responsibility to bury the dead lady (ROB 21 September 1806). As a matter of fact, by taking the responsibility to bury the dead, a person is considered to be the heir of the deceased. In another case, five land owners in Yadana Theinga (Shwebo) died without heirs and all their lands were given by the King to Prince Sagaing (ROB 5 October 1806). These instances give us an additional information that when a property is left with no heir, the king would give it to anyone by passing an Order. This information is new in the sense that we find no mention of it in any of the published works on the Dhammathats of Burma.

The King wanted almost everything done properly and correctly. The following instances taken from his Orders would illustrate this attitude of the King well. In using the beasts of burden, he did not like small animals used to draw big loads (ROB 3 April 1785). Young men should not sing loud indecent songs along the main roads at night (ROB 3 April 1785) or they should not go about from place to place without having been properly dressed (ROB 3 April 1785). No one should use white dresses which is reserved for the royalty (ROBs 9 February 1806 and 19 February 1806) nor put on velvet footwear (ROB 3 April 1785). Women were not allowed to have their hair cut short (ROB 27 April 1806). When writing, letter of the alphabet written only in the circular form

(in contrast to square ones used in olden times) should be used (ROB 10 May 1806). Time announcement in Amarapura should be synchronized with that of Min Gun (ROBs 3 June 1806, 4 June 1806, 22 July 1806 and 30 September 1806). All the King's sons shall keep the sabbath, i.e. they shall observe the Sila of Eight Features on the eighth, fifteenth, twenty third and thirtieth days of every month (ROB 8 June 1806). Ex-officers must stay only in the capital city; they were not allowed to go and live elsewhere (ROB 8 July 1806). For musical and theatrical entertainments in the palace, young men were selected for training and while they were under training, they were exempted from doing any corvee (ROB 7 June 1801). Hanthawaddy officers were once asked to send Mon artistes in singing, dancing and playing musical instruments (ROB 13 May 1806). Palace music groups were reorganized (ROB 5 August 1806) and thirty young women of Lamaing - Royal Land Cultivators, were trained for the Queen's Music Troupe of Drums (ROB 21 October 1806).

Fire was a great hazard of old Burmese towns. Most of the buildings were of bamboo and thatch and bigger and finer ones including palace buildings were constructed entirely with wood. All these were in constant fear of burning. A special officer called Mi Wun - Officer of Fire, was appointed (ROB 15 September 1784) and fire fighting instructions were issued by the King quite often (ROBs 27 January 1788, 3 February 1788, 8 February 1788 and 17 June 1795). Fire Victims' Relief Order was passed to feed the people who lost their homes in the fire and to help them to rebuild them. (ROB 13 February 1788). The barracks of the guards of the palace and city and the customs house were built of bricks and tiles (ROBs 15 February 1788/ August 1806). The roofs of palace buildings were changed to tiles (ROB 26 March 1788). Princes, ministers, officers, etc. had to come immediately to the palace at any fire alarm, because more often than not a fire was a ruse used by a would-be usurper to the throne and so an



absence at the palace at the time of fire automatically made the absentee a suspect and therefore he would be punished (ROB 10 April 1806). In fact when all officers were at the palace, the fire fighting was left entirely in the hands of local people so that the fire always grew big and dangerous. In another instance, town officers were punished because the fire was not extinguished in time (ROB 1 October 1806). It was no wonder that almost the whole of Amarapura including all the palace buildings were burnt in the great fire of 13 March 1810.

Akauk Asa - Exacting Dues and taking Share from the Produce, were usually made at Gado - Ferry, In Ai - Fishery, Kin - Toll Gate / Guard Station, Pwè - Brokerage / Trade Fair, Seik - Port, and Ti - Depot, and it was criminally liable either to increase or decrease the customary rates (ROBs 31 August 1783, 31 December 1784, 5 January 1788, 28 January 1795 No. 19, 15 July 1801 and 22 March 1806). Taxes collected from religious establishments were used for the maintenance of religious establishments (ROBs 5 January 1788 and 11 February 1788). Law court fees were Apaw Wun - Given by Plaintiff at the Beginning of a Suit, and Taya Kun Bo - Paid by Both Parties at the Termination of a Suit (ROBs 24 February 1788, 28 January 1795, 15 July 1801 and 4 July 1806). Taxes can be paid either in cash or kind but when crops failed, paying tax in paddy bought for this purpose alone was not allowed (ROB 13 March 1788) and probably it means that tax was waived for that year. When paid in cash, a silver called Ywet Ni - Red Leaf, was the standard type used and using any inferior kind was punishable. At that time Arakan was already using coins, but the coins sent in payment of tax from Dhaññawati (Mrok U), Dwarawati (Sandoway), Meghawati (Man Aung) and Rammawati (Ramree) were found to be of inferior silver. Responsible officers from these towns were brought to the capital city to observe the assaying of their coins and then they were asked to pay the

difference (ROB 13 August 1806 and 20 October 1806). In addition to tax payment in cash and kind, we find that there was also Akhun Daw Thint Lu Ngè - Young Men sent in Payment of Tax (ROB 7 May 1801). A young man was sent in lieu of how much cash or crop and for what purpose he would be employed, were not known. In foreign trade, there was a customs house in Hantawaddy called Day Wun Taik (ROB 31 July 1807) and in the capital a merchant was commissioned as Thin Baw Kon Pwè Za - Dealer in Goods brought in Ships (ROBs 11 August 1806 and 25 August 1806). These people who had to deal with foreigners were allowed to use official robes and insignias of rank much higher than their original status in order to impress the foreigners that they were in contact with very high officers of the kingdom (ROBs 9 February 1806, 1 March 1806 and 4 March 1806). Things imported were largely textile, glassware, diamonds and guns (ROB 7 August 1806). The import tax was ten per cent ad valorem (ROB 11 August 1806). Export of bronze and iron was prohibited (ROB 20 July 1801). Gold and silver were also not allowed to be taken to Thin Baw Pyay - Ship Cities (across the Ocean) (ROB 22 April 1806). In one reference we find that the Thin Baw Pyay - Ship City, was in Bengal and therefore it was most probably Calcutta (ROB 28 June 1795). The King noticed that foreigners were usually dishonest because they tried to evade tax (ROBs 7 August 1806, 11 August 1806 and 14 August 1806) and he also knew that tax evasion was possible only when his officers were corrupt (ROBs 11 June 1806, 12 July 1806 and 11 August 1806). People from the west were Armenians, Europeans, Indians and Persians and some of them were in the service of the Burmese king. Foreign names we noticed in the Royal Orders are :

Akbar (ROB 28 May 1801)  
Ambagaha (Srilanka, ROB 1 May 1806)  
Canning, John (British, ROB 26 December 1811)  
Davies, Capt. (American, ROB 14 November 1806)  
Hussaini, Abisha (ROBs 18 March 1806 and 19 March 1806)  
Ibrahim (ROBs 14 August 1806 and 18 August 1806)

Mackertich, T.M. / Hanthawaddy Akauk Wun - Customs Officer, Shwe  
Daung Thiri Nawyatha (ROB 17 March 1806)  
Razel (ROB 22 June 1801)  
Watt, Edgar (ROBs 10 August 1795 and 4 July 1801)

On trade with China we were told about disturbances to peaceful trade due to  
Tayok Tayet Yan Sit - Enmity between Chinese and ?Panthay (ROB 8 February 1788).  
When the Chinese traders came by the Taiping route, they were taxed at Bhamo  
and the Burmese who went to trade with them were taxed at Canpanago (ROB 18  
February 1788). For all affairs with Chinese, including translating  
correspondence (ROBs 18 October 1805 and 19 December 1805) and controlling  
Chinese workers employed in lead or silver mines within the Burmese territory  
or Chinese carpenters in various construction projects of the city, there was a  
Tayok Wun - Officer of Chinese Affairs (ROBs 15 June 1795 and 15 June 1801).  
There were a few reports that Chinese traders were robbed in Hsenwi area (ROB  
19 February 1806) and Hsipaw area (ROB 1 March 1806) and because of a long  
standing friendship between the two nations and because it was the law of the  
land that local chiefs were always held responsible to capture robbers, etc. in  
their areas and if they were unable to produce them, they had to pay a  
compensation on any damage done by the robbery. Chiefs of Hsenwi and Hsipaw  
were ordered to pay compensations to the Chinese traders. Some Chinese living  
beyond Burma even claimed that they were Hnit Hpet Kyun - Servants of Two  
Masters on Either Side of the Border (ROBs 24 July 1806 and 25 March 1807).  
There were, however, some people along the Burma-China border hostile to  
both nations. An envoy from Burma consisting Nay Myo Shwe Daung, Thiha Kyaw  
Gaung and Waylu Thaya were held up for sometime without any progress into China  
because of them (ROBs 3 January 1788 and 24 January 1788). A return Chinese  
envoy came in 1795 and a special house was built for them across the Taung  
Thaman lake (ROB 14 June 1795). An English envoy arrived almost at the same  
time (ROBs 26 June 1795 and 28 June 1795) and they were received on the same

day as the Chinese were received by the King on 30 August 1795 (ROB 19 August 1795) but the King admitted himself by stating that the Chinese were in a much more cordial relationship with Burma than the British (ROB 8 July 1795). Even then both envoys were, to the Burmese, tribute bearers <sup>from</sup> / 'lesser kings' (ROBs 28 June 1795 and 3 July 1801). The King received a carriage of eight horses from Calcutta on 1 November 1796 (Kon II 1967, 104). Four cannons each made like a crocodile, a lion, a serpent and a tiger ( probably from an Indian Raja and now in the Tower of London Museum) were received on 12 March 1797 (Kon II 1967, 118). More gifts from the British in Bengal were received on 14 October 1802 (Kon II 1967, 128). From China the most treasured gifts, it seems, were the three brides arriving at Amarapura on 18 October 1790 (Kon II 1967, 66). Among the return gifts to China there was a live crocodile (ROB 24 July 1795) which caused some commotion in Amarapura when it escaped from the moat where it was confined temporarily (ROB 6 August 1795). Three images of the Buddha made of alabaster with the marks of His Burmanic Majesty on each pedestal were also sent to China (ROB 17 June 1795). In another instance Burma received (a replica of) the tooth relic of the Buddha from China (ROB 22 April 1805). There was in fact not much cordiality in the relation with the British and it <sup>further</sup> dwindled / towards the end of King Badon's reign due to Manipura and Arakanese affairs. (ROBs 23 April 1806, 24 April 1806 and 25 October 1806).

War with Thailand was started in 1785. Troops of invasion via Mergui marched on 3 August 1785, via Tavoy on 12 September 1785, via Chiangmai on 25 September 1785, via Martaban on 8 October 1785 (Kon II 1967, 23-4). The King left the capital to lead the invasion on 11 November 1785 but he came back without owning defeat, of course, on 6 February 1785 (Kon II 1967, 25 & 34). Another campaign against Thailand begun on 7 September 1786 and the troops retreated to Martaban soon (Kon II 1967, 37 & 39). More elaborate plans were

made for the 1788 invasion. Defenses at Madama (Martaban), Dawè (Tavoy), Taninthayi Tenasserim and Bait (Mergui) as well as at Yangon (Rangoon), Toungoo and Mong Nai were strengthened (ROBs 21 March 1788, 23 March 1788 and 1 April 1788) and war funds were raised (ROB 24 March 1788). Gun powder was collected from all available sources in Burma before the Thai campaign was started (ROB 2 April 1788) using routes via Mong Nai as well as Madama (Martaban) (ROBs 3 April 1788, 6 April 1788 and 7 April 1788). Separate uniforms were made for each troop (ROB 13 March 1788). An oath of allegiance was administered to all men in the fighting forces (ROB 20 April 1788). All blacksmiths in the kingdom were gathered in the capital to produce guns (ROB 2 April 1788). Local guns were as good as the imported ones (ROBs 30 April 1806, 21 May 1806 and 2 November 1806). This 1788 campaign, however, was a failure too. In 1792 Dawè (Tavoy) changed allegiance and went over to the Thai side. A contingent of troops were sent against Dawè (Tavoy) on 4 March 1792. Madama (Martaban) defenses were reinforced on 21 April 1792 and more troops were sent against Dawè (Tavoy) on 25 May 1792 (Kon II 1967, 71 & 73). The Crown Prince was made commander of troops marching to take back Dawè (Tavoy) on 28 May 1792. Dawè (Tavoy) fell after a night attack on 28 December 1792 (Kon II 1967, 73 & 82). Thais also withdrew from Bait (Mergui) (Kon II 1967, 82) and since then Tenasserim coast was Burmese (Wood 1926, 274). But the Burmese were not successful in the eastern front. Thado Thiri Maha Uzana, Commander of Forces in Chiangmai, was said to be extremely inefficient (ROB 4 January 1788). In 1796 Prince Kawila established himself ruler of Chiangmai (Wood 1926, 274) and the Burmese were finally expelled from Chiengsen which was their last stand in northern Thailand in 1802 (Wood 1926, 274).

There is an English account on a Burmese envoy sent to Vietnam (Cochin-China) in 1823 (Pearn 1964). In the Burmese account, the country from which

two representatives called Ka-tway-lan (Cao-dahn-lan) and Du-hah-brai came, was mentioned as Yun Gyi - Big Yun, (Kon II 1967, 341, 346, 347) because Lao Shan tribes around Chiangmai were to the Burmese Yun (Kaung Han / ?Kengheng). In fact the envoys were not sent from their King Minh Mang (1820 - 1841). They were sent by Chao Kun, Governor of South Vietnam with the hope of opening up trade relations with Burma, especially to procure esculent birds' nests of Tenasserim coast. They started from Saigon on 25 December 1820 (Kon II 1967, 346) and they reached Amarapura (Ava was capital again only on 3 March 1824)

on 2 January 1822. The King received them on 14 May 1822 and on their return on 18 September 1822, the Burmese envoys went with them with the hope that Burma and Vietnam could become allies against Thailand which was a common enemy. Nay Myo Dazaung was head of the envoy and he was accompanied by Thiri Seinda Nawyatha, Theidi Nawyatha, Seinda Thiri Harat, Thiwa Kyaw Thu Nawyatha (Chinese) and (William) Gibson (British) as interpreter. The mission left Rangoon in January 1823 and arrived at Saigon on 8 June 1823. They remained there (without being sent on to Huè the Capital) until 14 March 1824 when they returned accompanied by a Vietnamese envoy. The letter from Burma was translated into French and Latin. We do not know why it was not translated into Chinese which both parties could do well. On Burma's overture to friendship, the Vietnamese asked two very sensible questions : why the Burmans had failed repeatedly to conquer the Thai, and how a friendship between two lands so far apart like Burma and Vietnam could bring about an advantageous traffic. The Burmese answer was simple. They held the northern part of the Mekong river and Vietnam its southern part. If they two could unite and eliminate the Thai who held the middle part, they would become very close and trade between them would become real and profitable. Then the possibility of war between Thai and British over the question of Kedah in Malay was discussed. The Vietnamese

wanted to know more about the military power of Burma. They said that they better send their own envoys to Burma to find that out by themselves. By the middle of February 1824, the Burmese envoys were told that their proposal of a treaty of friendship was rejected. They left Saigon on 14 March 1824, accompanied by a Vietnamese envoy. On arrival at Singapore on 9 April 1824, they knew that a war between Burma and British had already been started since 5 March 1824. The whole party was sent to Penang. Gibson as a British subject was sent from Penang to Rangoon where he was employed as an interpreter. A few months later he died of cholera at Prome. Taking a junk, the rest of the party went from Penang to Tavoy. A few days after their arrival, Tavoy was taken by the British (September 1824) and the Burmese envoys were taken as prisoners while Vietnamese envoys were sent back to their country. This attempt to have friendly relations between Burma and Vietnam in 1820s seemed to be the very first time but the chronicles (Kon II 1967, 347) alluded to a former relation in the time of King Gia-Long 1802 - 1820 and the Royal Orders supply some details on this subject. Although the envoys of 1820s used the sea route via Melaka and Singapore to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), the envoys of 1800s went via east Shan route through Lu Hse Hnit Panna - Lu Twelve Areas, and along the Mekong river. The capital of Vietnam was called Kyaw Pyi Gyi - Big Further City. When the envoys arrived at Amarapura, an Order was passed :

Tributes from Kyaw Pyi Gyi - Big Further City, shall be brought to His Majesty (now at Min Gun) together with the envoys who had brought these (tributes) here (ROB 17 June 1801).

The King decided, it seems, to send a return envoy to Vietnam from Kenghung on the Mekong on the northeast of Kengtung.

Nga Nyo Min and Nga Shin Galay came from Town Officer and Regimental Officer of Kyaing Thi - Chiengsen, bringing the report from  
Thu Yain Mani  
Pyan Chi Kyaw Zwa  
Letwè Yè Gaung  
Aka Yè Gaung and

Yan Chin Thu  
who were sent to Kyaw Pyi - Further City. Myo Za - Person holding a Town in fief, of Mong U which is one of the twelve places under Kenghung also sent his report with these messengers. Reply message to these reports, addressed to the Chief and Regimental Officers of Kenghung as written by ministers concerned are approved. Saw Yon shall remain in charge of Mong Nun because the mission to Kyaw Pyi - Further City, led by Thu Yain Mani, would not need his services (ROB 5 July 1801).

An officer either on duty at a sea port where foreign ships called or on being sent abroad as an envoy, was given a rank higher than his real one.

Min Hla Kyaw Zwa, Myo Wun - Town Officer, Hanthawaddy, shall receive the insignias as given to Min Hla Nawyatha, because he should have the appearance of a magnate while he is in charge of a big sea port where sailors from other islands came to receive His Majesty's generous help (ROB 9 February 1806).

Accordingly the Burmese envoys to Kyaw Pyi - Further City, would have higher ranks during their mission to Vietnam.

For the sake of prestige, envoys to Kyaw Pyi - Further City, were given high titles and magnificent dress and retinue. Now that they came back, they shall surrender those titles and return all the dresses, mounts, etc. that they had used during the mission (ROB 4 March 1806).

By this Order we also know that on 4 March 1806 or thereabout the envoys returned from Vietnam, probably accompanied by a Vietnamese envoy who would be returning to their country by the middle of July 1806.

Letter to the King and Ministers of Kyaw Pagan - Further Pagan, as written by Min Gyi Nawyatha, Commander, Mong Nai, is approved (ROB 15 July 1806).

Incidentally the capital city of Vietnam (Hue) was also known to the Burmese as Kyaw Pagan - Further Pagan. As a matter of fact Vietnam in some 1635 accounts is mentioned as Kyaw Kathè - Further Cathay, which was the easternmost limit of the areas under Buddhism (Zabudipa 1960, 8).

Kyaw Kathè - Further Cathay, has in the east an ocean that surrounds Zabudipa Island, in the south a sea port for Laṅkāḍīpa (Śrī Laṅkā), in the west Gon (Kengtung) land, and in the north Lu Twelve Areas (Sisom Panna) and Mong Yon (?Kenghung) (Zabudipa 1960, 13-14).



Vietnam which was called Kyaw Kathè - Further Cathay, in the 17th century became Kyaw Pyi - Further City, or Kyaw Pagan - Further Pagan, or Yun Gyi - Big Yun, later. Kathè is Cathay heré; Kathè meaning Assam Manipur is described as:

Kathè land, by the four points of compass, extends in the south to where it becomes adjacent to the land of Thaungthut (Hsawnghsup), in the west beyond the range of hills extending further west until a shallow sea (is reached), on the north to the villages of Waruchwè and Tha Hko, on the northeast to the land of Hmaing Way - Hovering Mist, and on the east the western (Bank) of the Chindwin (river) (Zabudipa 1960, 15).

In internal affairs, the King's hardest problem, it seems, was religion. He had had several doubts on traditional believes of Buddhism. For instance, he said that there was no scriptural support that the Buddha's Religion would last for 5,000 years (ROB 5 October 1806). He wanted no schism among monks (ROBs 18 March 1788 and 15 July 1801). As a result some senior monks had to leave monkhood because they were found to be not agreeable to the rest of the community of monks (ROBs 15 March 1788, 28 June 1795, 6 July 1799, 20 July 1801, 22 July 1801 and 23 July 1801). Later he realized that it was best to tolerate in matters religion and therefore he allowed monks even to have the (once forbidden) ways of

Mothi Hmanzi monks  
Nga Mya Ton Nwe monks and  
Pwè Gyaung monks (ROBs 8 November 1807 and 9 November 1807).

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